

## **Wamsutter, Sweetwater County, industry, and UW extension form 'healthy' partnership**

### **Situation:**

Wamsutter Community Health Center, a project three years in development, hosted a grand opening event in January. The event culminated more than three years of effort by the town, Sweetwater County, industry, and individuals. In November 2006, residents at a town meeting determined healthcare as one of the top five needs of the community, along with infrastructure, housing, commercial development, and sewer upgrades. To identify the need and sustainability of a health center in Wamsutter, the town selected the Wyoming-based healthcare consulting firm Human Capital Management Services (HCMS) of Cheyenne.

BP America and Sweetwater County responded to a community investment request and joined with the town to pay for the services. In February 2007, HCMS worked with members of the community and town staff to acquire health and healthcare-related data. A detailed report supported the need for a non-traditional health center in Wamsutter. In addition to medical care, the center will provide space for educational programs on wellness, nutrition, and other health-related services such as dentistry and chiropractic care.

Utilizing the services of HCMS, made possible by a community investment from BP America and Wamsutter, the firm agreed to develop a business plan, help garner broad financial support, and assist the town in seeking healthcare provider services.

### **Impacts:**

Upon completion of the second HCMS study, the town was on its own to turn recommendations into reality. The town entered into a partnership with Wamsutter Community Inc., the all-purpose, charitable nonprofit organization established in 2007. The town contributed land and took responsibility for seeking funding to pay for construction; the nonprofit took responsibility for seeking operational and staff funding. In October 2008, Mayor Ken Waldner sent a letter to Gov. Dave Freudenthal detailing the priority needs of the community with estimated costs. The result was monumental. Gov. Freudenthal requested, and the Legislature appropriated, \$3.5 million in matching funds for infrastructure improvements. Meanwhile, BP America had pledged to

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match the state appropriation up to \$3 million and Sweetwater County already had designated \$250,000 for the health center. From the public and private funds, the town had the funding to construct the building, and the nonprofit had the funds to ensure the first two years of start-up operations.

Of the many partnerships crucial in establishing the Wamsutter Community Health Center, the most fundamental was the partnership created in 2006 by industry, Sweetwater County, the Town of Wamsutter, and the University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service. All parties agree that, without the extension community development educator, neither the health center nor many other community enhancement projects would be present today. The extension educator serves as coordinator and facilitator for numerous projects on a full-time basis. In addition, the community did not possess the expertise in planning and development the university position has provided.

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